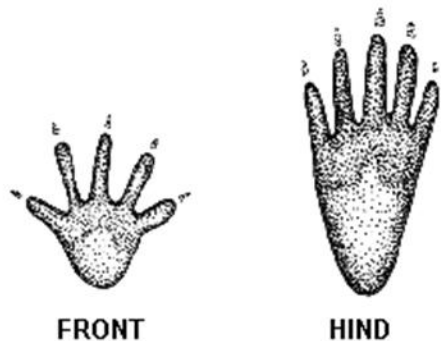




If you see a raccoon, enjoy it from a distance. Don't do anything to attract it to you and don't try to pet it. Raccoons are wild animals. And to avoid costly damage to camping equipment, keep your site clean and free from food scraps. Store your food properly so you won't become a victim of THE BANDIT.

**To report Wildlife Violations in Virginia:
call 1-800-237-5712**

When reporting try to get as much information as possible such as: What happened. Where did it happen, Who was involved, describe persons, vehicles and witnesses, and When did it happen.



Ten Fast Facts About the Raccoon

1. The raccoon's Latin name, *Procyon lotor*, means "Before Dog".
2. Raccoons caught in traps have been known to gnaw their leg off to escape.
3. The raccoon's major natural predators are large owls, foxes, coyotes and bobcats.
4. Winter is the raccoon's worst enemy when food is scarce.
5. Raccoons will sometimes make their home in an abandoned groundhog hole, a cave, barn or even a house.
6. The raccoon, with the exception of a mother and her young, are solitary and hunt alone.
7. The raccoon is at home in the water and has been known to drown an attacking dog.
8. Hisses, growls, screams, and snarls are among the vocal sounds made by raccoons.
9. Raccoons are very intelligent and curious.
10. One half of the rabies cases in Patrick, Henry, and Franklin counties are among raccoons.

Philpott Lake
Visitor Assistance Center
1058 Philpott Dam Road
Bassett, VA 24055

Telephone: (276)629-2703
Fax: (276)629-3493
E-mail: philpott@usace.army.mil
Website: www.saw.usace.army.mil/philpott/index.htm

Raccoon: Philpott's Little Bandit

Philpott Lake



The raccoon is very plentiful in the Philpott area. Raccoons can be seen crossing park roads, sneaking through a campsite, or searching the lakeshore for food. Because raccoons are nocturnal (active mainly at night) we often don't even know they have visited. We may find the results of their visit when we awake at our campsite to find our coolers open and our food eaten. We may even see that our soft drinks have had a hole eaten through the plastic bottle and every drop guzzled by our little raider.



Photo By: Richard Wigley

The raccoon has a gray to brown color. Like many bandits, it wears a black mask around its eyes with an outline of white fur. It has a long bushy tail with four to seven black rings. The raccoon's paws have five toes with one being like our thumb. This enables the raccoon to be very dexterous. The raccoon's "fingers" are long and flexible, which make them very good for holding and pulling things apart. Climbing is a specialty of the raccoon. It can climb a tree quite rapidly and descend backwards or head first.



The mother raccoon will give birth to 4-7 kits each year. The mother carries the young by the back of the neck like a cat. The father takes no part in rearing the family and will be chased away from the den if he approaches. The mother will teach her young how to hunt and how to climb trees. Raccoons around Philpott usually den in hollow trees. They are known to "sleep in" for weeks in particularly cold weather, but do not hibernate. Raccoons prefer wooded areas near water, but they are very adaptable. Raccoons can be found throughout the suburbs and even inside cities.



The raccoon is an omnivore. It is very opportunistic and will take advantage of a meal anywhere it finds one. Some of its more common foods include fruits, berries, insects, crayfish, eggs, corn, and frogs. A family of raccoons can wreck a small corn field in short order.

Raccoons are thought by some people to wash their food. This is not true. They are actually using the water to soften the food and look for any non-food items attached to the food.

The raccoon's fur becomes long and very soft in the winter. Their fur was once prized for hats and raccoon skin coats. However, now it is used only occasionally for fur collars, cuffs and trim on more inexpensive garments.

Raccoons can be vicious fighters and are very protective of their young. They are excellent swimmers and can run 15 miles per hour. They are also very intelligent. In fact, their intelligence level is that of primates.



Photo: Wikipedia